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OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES

EUROPE-AFRICA DIVISION

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ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT IN METROPOLITAN FRANCE

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ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT IN METROPOLITAN FRANCE

I. The Rise of Anti-American Sentiment in France

Although the United States still enjoys great prestige in France, an anti-American sentiment has recently made its appearance. It is largely a result of three events: the establishment of a new French regime in North Africa, the creation of AMG, and the bombing of the industrial areas of northern France.

A. North African Operations

From a variety of sources it is amply evident that the people of France feel that the activities of the United States in North Africa have injured their interests and their amour propre. To a residue of distrust arising from the "Darlan deal" has been added the suspicion that the United States has utilized its support of Giraud as a device to check the rise of de Gaulle, and to this end has interfered in purely French affairs, even to the extent of protecting unpopular Vichyites in office in North Africa and elsewhere. The failure on the part of Great Britain and the United States to grant full recognition to the FCNL, for which the United States and not Britain is blamed, is taken as further evidence that American policy is not friendly, especially since the United States recognizes the sovereignty of other governments in exile far less representative.

The principal basis of this French sensitivity is the fact that the people of France feel deeply the injuries they have suffered. As citizens of a great power they are keenly aware of their humiliation. Apprehensive of the smallest slight, zealous for the restoration of their prestige almost to the point of being psychopathic, they respond sharply to every act they deem to be an affront to French dignity. Regretable as this may be, it is a sensitivity which nevertheless exists in fact.

Within France itself this has given rise to all sorts of fears. Frenchmen feel that since American policy in North Africa seems at least equivocal there is no telling what the United States has in store for France. Will a landing in metropolitan France be accompanied by a "Darlan deal" with Vichyites? Will France be forever treated as a minor power by the Anglo-Saxons? To a Frenchman the policy of the United States does not seem to be an open one. His reaction to it is to suspect something sinister.

In large measure the friendship of de Gaulle and other Frenchmen for Russia is based upon this fear, and upon the complimentary feeling that Russia will accord France an honorable place in Europe. By most Frenchmen this is felt in terms transcending the communist issue; it is purely a matter of realpolitik.

B. AMG

As a reflection of the sentiments expressed above, Frenchmen have suspected that France, during the course of liberation, will be ruled as conquered territory by AMG. The suspicion contains a dual fear: first, that Frenchmen will not be treated as friendly and equal partners in the labors of liberation, and second, that the Anglo-Saxons will police France to the extent of prejudicing the form of its future government.

At the bottom there rest the beliefs in many Frenchmen's minds, however ill founded, that the United States may make some local arrangement with Vichy or former Vichyites, that American policy fails to recognize that the same Frenchman may at one and the same time be both violently anti-German and violently pro-fascist, and that Petain represents a social revolution, contrary to the will of the French people, designed to survive the fall of Germany.

C. American Bombing in Northern France

American high altitude bombing in northern France, especially in its early phases, has been the cause of considerable loss of life among civilians. This is perhaps largely unavoidable, but the morale problem created can hardly be over-emphasized. A notable example of its significance can be seen in the case of Brittany, where the people are in the main friendly toward America except in Rennes, where heavy civilian casualties were sustained in the American air raids of last May. The sinister aspect of the problem posed by the reactions to bombing lies in the fact that it provides a plausable and humanitarian cloak for concealed collaborationist sympathies.

II. Extent and Class Distribution of French Anti-American Sentiment

A. Extent of Anti-American Sentiment

There is noway of gauging the extent of anti-American sentiment in France. There of course has always been some in all parts of the country. By and large its present rise is probably more a matter of volume than quantity. The serious part of the

matter, however, is the strain it places upon an appreciable amount of goodwill already possessed in Europe by the United States. It provides a set of circumstances in which other nations, including Great Britain and Russia as well as Germany, can operate to the disadvantage of the United States. It would be an error to say that French friendship for the United States was even approaching the breaking point, but each presumed affront, each alleged holding back of the full import of American policy, sorely tries and puzzles many Frenchmen.

B. Distribution of Anti-American Sentiment

For the most part it is not possible to establish a class breakdown of anti-American sentiment in France. Those Frenchmen who feel that American policy has injured their national interests can be found in all classes. French laborers, professionals, intellectuals, and republicans in general, viewing the pattern in North Africa, feel that the security of democracy in the France of the future may be jeopardized by the direction in which American weight is thrown. French collaborationists, the bulk of whom are in the middle class, believe that the republican measures which the United States has urged upon Giraud indicate an American will to upset the Petain revolution. Collaborationist fears are a matter of little concern, since they affect only a small minority of Frenchmen; the apprehensions of resisting and republican Frenchmen, however, are a matter of great importance. There are virtually no Frenchmen who believe in the existence of a middle ground between the two positions.